

Spencer Harvie







I visited Spencer Harvie's studio during his first week of honours at the Queensland College of Art. His previous work revealed a consuming engagement with conspiracy theories as forms of creative practice, examining the complex nature of truth in the relationship between history and visual culture. Harvie's latest drawings cover every studio surface and suggest a turn inward, the beginning of a personal cosmology.

*Mitch Donaldson: Is drawing very important to your practice?*

Spencer Harvie: Everything I do starts on a blank mind, on a blank bit of yellow paper. Usually its just sort of like, oh I'll draw an angel, and he's sorta me and, carrying a woman.

*And it snowballs?*

Yeah so I'll do maybe 50 or 60 drawings in one... well, maybe not that many.



*So its like automatic drawing?*

Yeah its a process of looking inward. Instead of looking outward and finding images to draw.

*Or working from photographs.*

Yeah ill just imagine scenes. I categorised all my drawings the other day and the categories I came up with were inside, outside, me, other people and elsewhere. Everything could fit into those categories.

*When you make a painting does it happen the same way, or do you collage together these drawn scenes?*

Yeah if I'm gonna do a painting it just comes from the drawing, a collage of two or three.

*Do you feel like it loses some of the intensity and immediacy of the drawings?*

Yeah, when your completely alone in the studio, your feeling something, your feeling fun actually, just moving the hand constantly.

*Its a more playful process?*

I've tried redrawing a couple of these and they don't look good.

*But the ideas might carry into the paintings or the next drawing?*

Yeah.

*So are conspiracy theories still influencing your work?*

I realised what I could be doing, there's a project that someone could do. It would be a kind of outside journalistic pursuit. Like ok lets get some numbers on the JFK, and lets aestheticise that. Lets mash up some videos of it, and that's wanting to understand it from an outside perspective. Whereas I'm like, its more about the individual and the world.

*A certain way of relating to the world?*

Yeah I think conspiracy theorists might feel dis-empowered by the world and they kinda want to have some ownership of it, they wanna control something. Sometimes to the detriment of certain levels of rationality.

*So its more about the process of piecing those things together than any final narrative? It doesn't matter how problematic the overall picture is, as long as you can make the pieces fit.*

See conspiracy theorists know exactly what the problem is.

*I think conspiracy theorists try to make you question which account of the world is the truth. But if you assume that there are many possible stories, you worry about which is right, which do you choose to believe? Instead you involve yourself with creating these alternative realities.*

I'm enjoying that process but I think conspiracy theorists are genuinely frightened and think the US Government blew up the World Trade Center.

*Once you engage in that process, actively making your world rather than being a passive participant, you take on the responsibility for what's created.*

With these latest drawings I want to give space to the world in my head, to let it expand.